

REVIEW ON THE DRAFTING PROCESS AND COMPARISON OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

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Abstract:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) differ from the MDGs in purpose, concept, and politics. This article focuses process and comparison of the predecessor to the SDGs. The identification of Millennium Development Goals and the follow-on Sustainable Development Goals are referred here as examples of such policy-forming activities. The Millennium Declaration was adopted on 8th September 2000. According to David Hulme, the drafting process attempted to please both the rich countries insisting on their Development Assistance Committee (DAC) prepared list of International Development Goals and everybody else. It argues that the SDGs address several of the key shortcomings of the MDGs and incorporate a broader and more transformative agenda that more adequately reflects the complex challenges of the 21st century, and the need for structural reforms in the global economy. The SDGs also reverse the MDG approach to global goal setting and the misplaced belief in the virtues of simplicity, concreteness, and quantification. While the SDGs promise the potential for a more transformative agenda, implementation will depend on continued advocacy on each of the targets to hold authorities to account. The future of global public participation may move beyond invitation (and its deficiencies), to one based on collecting passive information of the global public. It still remains to be seen whether SDGs really demonstrates the long-term public concerns especially with the set of global priorities until 2030.

Keywords — Sustainable Development Goals, Millennium Development Goals, DAC, United Nations

1. INTRODUCTION

In the process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reaching its final stage, an Open Working Group (OWG) of the United Nations (UN) in July 2014, produced a first draft of the SDGs, consisting of 17 goals and 169 targets. This draft and other reports were taken by the UN Secretary-General as input for his synthesis report and were expected late November 2014. The Open Working Group (OWG) proposals remain the basic document for the final negotiations within the UN General Assembly in September 2015 on the adoption of a Post-2015 development agenda.

Global public participation in the work of the United Nations can be described as the practice of consulting and involving the world's citizens,

especially those substantially interested and affected, in UN policy-forming activities. The identification of Millennium Development Goals and the follow-on Sustainable Development Goals are referred here as examples of such policy-forming activities.

In short, we look for direct participation, by the world's citizens or sub-groups thereof, in UN policy-forming relating to affairs that affect the interests of those citizens. This differs from a general analysis of the role of NGOs, corporations, or other non-State actors. Global public participation can also be differentiated from indirect public participation in UN affairs, i.e. through the Member States.

2. HOW THE MDGS CAME INTO BEING

The drafting of the Millennium Development Goals will be relatively brief because these goals did not result from inclusive and participatory processes. As Scott Wisor highlighted, “only a few key civil servants and development experts were involved in the process. Looking to the MDGs, in 2000 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Millennium Declaration. The drafting and adopting of MDGs was not neat and organized, but chaotic and full of disagreements and difficult compromises. Most importantly, the Millennium Declaration does not contain a set of goals; it actually took creative reading and tough negotiating to subsequently extract eight MDGs from the Declaration.

The story begins in the early 1990s, with world conferences on global challenges organized under the auspices of the United Nations. Many resulted in brief outcome documents or declarations, listing a few priority areas and challenges with general policies to tackle them. Some had enormous influence over the development of international law and policymaking, such as the Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993). This long series of global summits demonstrated that it was possible to reach global agreements, and collectively define grand challenges with a limited set of commitments to tackle them. The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) was perhaps most influential on the MDGs. The resulting Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development identified ten “commitments”, initially relating to creating an enabling environment for social development, eradicating poverty, promoting full employment, social integration and human rights protection. The Declaration was explicit about the need to adopt international development goals focusing on meeting basic needs and eradicating poverty. The idea to summarize these commitments, in combination with all other global summits, through a limited set of development goals came

from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This group comprised around twenty to thirty rich States, known for having generous international development assistance policies.

Being an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) committee, Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is not part of the UN system, and it cannot claim to speak on behalf of the UN’s entire membership. Participation is limited to its own richest State membership. But among those twenty-thirty countries, only few participated enthusiastically in the process of summarizing the summit outcomes into a simple set of goals. According to David Hulme, thanks to a very small group of individuals that the DAC staff began to study all the outcome documents of the global summits of the 1990s in an attempt to rephrase them into one coherent list of commitments, goals, or targets. This resulted in a booklet, entitled “Shaping the 21st Century.” The Contribution of Development Co-operation (1996), in which such goals were identified, if one compares this list with the MDGs, the resemblance is remarkable. The booklet aimed to select “a limited number of indicators of success by which our efforts can be judged”; the challenge being agreed “ambitious but realizable goals.” At the time of publication (1996), these goals were embraced by some but ignored by most others within the international community OECD and DAC. It clearly did not inspire or motivate the entire world. Despite the fact that these goals were extracted from UN summit outcome documents, the UN itself was hesitant in adopting them, given that DAC only represents its membership of twenty to Thirty developed States. This origin would not make it easier to ensure universal adoption and acceptance. The latter 1990s brought about preparation for the summit-of-all-summits: the Millennium Summit. The ambition of drafting a brief Millennium Declaration was made public at an early stage, and the UN Secretariat invited various input—NGOs, States, the business community, social movements, etc. on what to be included. A few months before the summit, the

Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century was published. Whilst published under Secretary-General Kofi Annan's name, it is no secret that John Ruggie had a big influence in the drafting. The final chapter was formulated as a first proposal for the Millennium Declaration text, containing a list of global values and priorities. Some priorities, especially those under the heading "freedom from want," were clearly inspired by the goals identified by DAC in 1996. There were additional "priorities", not mentioned by DAC, whilst other goals listed by DAC were not included. Thus essentially two competing lists emerged: the short and concise by DAC, and the lengthy and comprehensive by Annan. Two months after publications were made the OECD, UN, IMF and World Bank issued a joint publication, to show that they were all united in their effort of identifying a list of goals. This joint report listed a set of "international development goals", almost identical to those proposed by DAC (1996), and very different from those proposed by Annan (2000). The Millennium Declaration was adopted on 8th September 2000. According to David Hulme, the drafting process attempted to please both the rich countries insisting on their DAC prepared list of International Development Goals and everybody else, i.e. other States of the world, NGOs, and so on. Most of what later became the MDGs were within Chapter III of the Millennium Declaration on development and poverty eradication. Eight such goals were extracted:

- 1) To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2) To achieve universal primary education
- 3) To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women
- 4) To reduce child mortality
- 5) To improve maternal health
- 6) To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7) To ensure environmental sustainability
- 8) To develop a global partnership for development.

But the Declaration contained many more resolutions and they were not called goals. The

resolution was: On peace and Security, Human Rights, Good Governance, UN Reform, Protection of the Environment, and many more on International Development Cooperation, all of which were ignored in the MDG process. It is important to emphasize that the extraction of the MDGs from the Millennium Declaration was again done by a relatively small working group. The rich continued to insist on their International Development Goals. As is clear from comparing the list of DAC goals and the MDGs, the latter are more derived from the work of DAC than the Millennium Declaration. It is thus helpful that the MDGs were subsequently embraced as a road map for the future by the full membership of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

In an official DAC publication, the story is summarized: "In September 2000, heads of state and government adopted the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, based largely on the formulation recommended in shaping the 21st Century and a better world for all. The Goals thus evolved from disparate findings in various UN conferences to becoming a unified set of DAC recommendations to the international community, and then to acquiring recognition as a universally-agreed vision to guide international co-operation." The DAC admits with a considerable sense of pride, that it was itself essentially the author of MDGs. Despite many efforts from NGOs, interest groups, Third World States, international corporations, etc. The MDGs drafting history discussed is reflected in its content, both in a positive and negative way. The goals were limited in number and very specific, with many defined in measurable figures or percentages, and bound by time. With more participants, it would undoubtedly have been much harder to agree on such a limited set of goals, excluding many topical issues and with such specificity. The specificity is a good thing, making it relatively easy to test whether the Goals will be met by the end of 2015. The MDGs were rather vague on allocating responsibilities. Only the principle of shared responsibility addressed the matter with "the nations of the world" jointly responsible.

The question arises if the world as a whole is responsible for achieving the MDGs? Easterly rightly pointed out, “if all of us are collectively responsible for a big world goal, then no single agency or politician is held accountable if the goal is not met. Furthermore the relationship with international law was unclear. References to international law of course help stimulate compliance. The language of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs is very much focused on individual entitlements, so a reference to human rights might have been obvious. But no MDG is formulated in human rights terms. At the same time, the importance of this missed opportunity should not be exaggerated. Clearly, the MDGs and human rights commitments are at least implicitly linked. So this deficiency could be remedied to some extent after the goals adoption. The success of MDGs has come with the strong desire to develop more ambitious follow ups, and the coupled interest of participation. Equally, the failures of the MDGs have led to calls for greater participation, in an effort to remedy, and importantly, not repeat the mistakes. But how has UN public participation evolved to meet this need is the one million question?

2.1 WERE THE MDGS SUCCESSFUL

The effectiveness of the MDGs has been the subject of considerable debate. Supporters argue that the development agenda promoted by the MDGs has spearheaded an unprecedented international movement against extreme poverty, reducing it by more than 50 percent globally. Prior to their enactment, individual campaigns aimed at the thematic areas within the MDGs – such as eliminating income poverty and promoting literacy – were already underway, but prior to the MDGs they had not been conceived as a coherent catalog of goals at the global level. Critics, on the other hand, note that progress on the specific targets set out by the MDGs has been both regionally and thematically unbalanced. This is because many countries adopted a “piecemeal approach”, choosing to engage with some but not all of the MDGs. This has been attributed to the fact that the MDGs only applied to countries of the global

South, and that they had collectively played a minimal role in their design. Consequently, the MDGs were perceived by several critics as a platform that was imposed on the developing countries by the more developed.

3.0 THE SDGS AND TARGETS

The year 2015 marked a transition period from the Millennium Development Goals to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This year’s report reviews the continent’s performance on the MDGs and assesses the opportunities and challenges associated with the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are a bold commitment to finish what we started, and tackle some of the more pressing challenges facing the world today. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The SDGs are an inclusive agenda; they tackle the root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet. "Poverty eradication is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, and so is the commitment to leave no-one behind.

These 17 Goals build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The goals are interconnected – often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another. All 17 Goals interconnect, meaning success in one affects success for others. Dealing with the threat of climate change impacts how we manage our fragile natural resources, achieving gender equality or better health helps eradicate poverty, and fostering peace and inclusive societies will reduce inequalities and help

economies prosper. In short, this is the greatest chance we have to improve life for future generations. To create a new, people-centered, development agenda, a series of global consultations were conducted both online and offline. Civil society organizations, citizens, scientists, academics, and the private sectors from around the world were all actively engaged in the process. The SDGs include 17 goals and 169 targets. The 17 goals in abridged form are as follows:

1. No poverty;
2. Zero hunger;
3. Good health and well-being;
4. Quality education;
5. Gender equality;
6. Clean water and sanitation;
7. Affordable and clean energy;
8. Decent work and economic growth;
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure;
10. Reduce inequality;
11. Sustainable cities and communities;
12. Responsible consumption and production;
13. Climate action;
14. Life under water;
15. Life on land;
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions; and
17. Partnership for the goals.

The targets are aspirational and global and that each government will set its own national targets taking into account the national circumstances. The SDGs can be broadly divided into three categories: First, an extension of MDGs that includes the first seven SDGs; second group is inclusiveness (jobs, infrastructure, industrialization, and distribution). It includes goals 8, 9, and 10; and the third group is on sustainability and urbanization that covers the last seven goals: sustainable cities and communities, life below water “consumption and production; climate action; resources and environment; peace and justice; and the means of implementation and global partnership for it”.

3.1 WHAT MAKES THE SDGS DIFFERENT

In sharp contrast to the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are uniformly

applicable to all countries of the world, removing the “developing” versus “developed” dichotomy that left the MDGs open to criticism. And while there are similarities in regard to the format of the MDGs and the SDGs – e.g. each framed the international development agenda for a 15-year period – the SDGs have significantly expanded on the scale and content of the MDGs. The SDGs are focused on a global development with and-for sustainability, and demonstrate an understanding that the environment is not an add-on or in opposition to sustainable development, but rather the base that underpins all other goals. As a result, whereas the MDGs maintained a retrospectively narrow focus on poverty reduction, the SDGs include new themes which reflect an approach that sees the environment, economy and society as embedded systems rather than separate competing “pillars”: e.g. urban areas, water and sanitation, energy, and climate change are all prominently featured. Another significant difference between the MDGs and SDGs is how they have been created: the crafting of the SDGs has been regarded as an unparalleled participatory policy process, and this is reflected in their scale and ambition. A UN Open Working Group (OWG) made up of 70 countries sharing 30 seats was established in 2013 to draft the SDGs and was tasked with incorporating a range of stakeholders into their negotiation process. As a result, developing countries have been able to provide significant input into the content, as have local and subnational governments, and prominent actors from civil society and the private sector.

3.2 CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE SDGS

The opportunity to rethink and redefine global development pathway comes once in a generation, this is an opportunity and we must seize it. This captures how important civil society’s participation within defining SDGs is to those involved—at least from the NGOs’ perspective. Such opportunities only occur when, unlike the MDGs, actors are involved in goal-setting. The UN institutions themselves appear equally assertive in their reaching out for participation of all stakeholders,

through a host of engagement methods and technologies. Given the multitude of work streams contributing to the SDGs prior to intergovernmental negotiations, a comprehensive review was not provided but rather focus on a few key issues highlighting how inclusive participation has evolved, but ultimately leaves much to be desired substantively. Briefly summarized opportunities for public participation beyond stand-alone conferences and stock-taking events fall into three categories: The UN Secretary-General led initiatives, including the High Level Panel of Eminent.

- Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP), the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and the UN Global Compact (UNGC). Whilst it is important to remember civil society was given the opportunity to contribute to the SDSN and UNGC, their primary focus is not civil society (science/technological community and private sector respectively). Our comments thus largely focus on the High Level Panel (HLP) and work streams below. The intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

- Open Working Group (OWG), which drafted proposed SDGs (mandated by Rio+20). The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) led the so-called “Global Conversation” which provided input into all the above. It has since expanded to provide implementation consultations for the upcoming interstate negotiations. We shall focus on invitation, input methods and participation to see what broad lessons can be learnt from global public participation to date. Whilst unjust to expect such global initiatives to be equivalent to national participation, the SDGs importance and self-imposed UN expectations, require the public holding participation claims to a high meaningfulness test. In terms of invitation, proposal drafting to-date has taken on the obligations of inclusion mentioned. For example WorldWeWant2015.org provides an online platform for various elements of multiple global, national and thematic public consultations, with the ambition it “will gather the priorities of people from

every corner of the world and help build a collective vision that will be used directly by the United Nations and World Leaders to plan a new development agenda launching in 2015, one that is based on the aspirations of all citizens!” The breadth of different audiences allows invitation of various fragments of civil society. As global goals, to be implemented at the national level, representation is required across both the global (e.g. people, thematic communities, regions, sub-regions and nations) and national (e.g. youth, NGOs, workers and experts) level—which the consultations have in some way tried to capture.

- However, meaningful participation and efficient resource use require targeted invitations to relevant participants. For general agenda setting consultations such as the MyWorld survey, aimed at broadly defining global public priorities, specification beyond people is unnecessary. Yet, consultations seeking stakeholders of country X must define and target said stakeholders. Mixed results exist across consultations, but numerous global and national consultations raised difficulties of ill-defined relevant stakeholders, excluded recognized stakeholders or suffered inequalities of access. What’s more, inclusivity efforts in participation initiatives say nothing about influential lobbying, which remains the reserve of those with New York representation. Civil society’s participation is dependent on an awareness, and means, of providing input. Whilst invitations to participate demonstrated ambition, the methods of raising awareness and collecting public input displayed a willingness for technological experimentation. The consultations demonstrate outreach through television, radio, newspapers, online advertisements, webcasts, blogs, press releases, YouTube, email, face-to-face surveying and the use of local networks and moderators. This variety in outreach was continued into methods of collection, with dedicated websites, social media outlets, individual interviews, group workshops, paper MyWorldballots, mobile phone surveys, photography competitions, roundtables and other surveys, from open questions to multi-choice selections.

The Global Conversation work stream has been most notable in terms of outreach experimentation (when compared to the more traditional discussion events methodology of other work streams), and its results were submitted to both the OWG and HLP alongside the direct submissions of civil society organizations. If one was to compare the HLP and OWG process, it is noticeable that High Level Panel (HLP) outreach events surrounding each meeting were more accessible given their geographical spread compared to the exclusively UN Headquarters focused OWG. Civil society also had the possibility of sitting directly on the HLP, and thus a great deal of drafting influence, an input option not available in the exclusively State membership OWG. However whilst commendable as the largest public consultations seen to date, the response and representation of civil society suffers from a significant deficit across the board. It is unclear whether this is due to a lack of information, access, and desire, or due to scepticism on the part of potential participants. Nevertheless, the poor response and depth of participation has long been ignored or side-lined; with outcome documents stating civil society has been represented without recognition of the participation deficits, or suggested improvements for the future. This low participation turnout is further exacerbated when the modalities of participation are unclear, or what the substantive influence or outcome of participating remain undefined. This overemphasis of representation is further evident in NGO submissions, which utilize the results to emphasize their agenda. Nevertheless, the SDGs process has begun to recognize the disparity between participation expectation and actual participation. This can be seen in the recent report on Portuguese consultations over localizing SDGs as part of the 2nd phase of the Global Conversation. The report recognized only 60 participants attended the 6 workshops, half of those who registered, and recognized the lack of response by organizations contacted - with some preliminary thoughts as to why. Whilst welcoming development, the problem may have been identified too late for increasing participation in setting the SDGs, but could address participation barriers and non-interest in implementation consultations.

4.0 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SDGs AND MDGs

SDGs benefit from the valuable lessons learned from MDGs. These also carry forward the unfinished agenda of MDGs for continuity and sustain the momentum generated while addressing the additional challenges of inclusiveness, equity, and urbanization and further strengthening global partnership by including Civil Society Organizations and private sector. They reflect continuity and consolidation of MDGs while making these more sustainable by strengthening environmental goals. There are seven major differences in MDGs and SDGs;

- 1) MDGs were drawn up by a group of experts in the 'basement of UN headquarters' whereas SDGs have evolved after a long and extensive consultative process including 70 Open Working Groups, Civil Society Organizations, thematic consultations, country consultations, participation of general public through face to face meetings and online mechanisms and door to door survey.
- 2) While MDGs were focused with only 8 goals, 21 targets and 63 indicators, SDGs include 17 goals with 169 targets. An expert analyses by noble laureates at Copenhagen consensus, suggest that if the UN concentrates on 19 top targets, it can get \$20 to \$40 in social benefits per dollar spent, while allocating it evenly across all 169 targets would reduce the figure to less than \$10. Being smart about spending could be better than doubling or quadrupling the aid budget.
- 3) MDGs had a focus on developing countries with funding came from rich countries. All countries, developed or developing, are expected to work towards achieving SDGs.
- 4) The pillars of human development, human rights and equity are deeply rooted in SDGs and several targets seven explicitly refer to people with disabilities, six to people in vulnerable situations, and two to non-discrimination. These were not even

mentioned in the MDGs; MDGs had three (3) direct health goals, four (4) targets and fifteen (15) indicators with emphasis on child, maternal mortality and communicable diseases. SDGs have one comprehensive goal emphasizing well-being and healthy living including Non-Communicable Diseases.

5) MDGs had a time span of 25 years though adopted in 2002 baseline data for the year 1990 was used and some of the baselines were revised subsequently which shifted 'the goal post'. For the SDGs, the baseline is from 2015 estimates. It may be revised as more recent data becomes available.

6) SDGs include a vision of building vibrant and systematic partnerships with private sector to achieve sustainable development. It builds on, UN Compact which was launched in year 2000 and IMPACT 2030.

7) MDGs had no concrete role for the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), whereas SDGs have paid attention to this right from the framing stage itself with significant engagement of civil society actors. The CSOs can play an important role to hold governments accountable at the local level.

8) The drafting and adopting of MDGs was not neat and organized, but chaotic and full of disagreements and difficult compromises while SDGs drafting includes public participation.

4.1 CHALLENGES

The four major challenges that need to be addressed for achieving the SDGs are as follows:

1. Some of the SDGs that have been costed show that the cost of the SDGs is huge. The rough calculations have put the cost of providing a social safety net to eradicate extreme poverty at about \$66bn a year, while annual investments in improving infrastructure (water, agriculture, transport, and power) could be up to a total of \$7tn globally. A major conference on financing for the SDGs, held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa in July, failed to ease concerns that there will not be enough funds to meet the aspirational nature of the

goals. It included a recommitment to the UN target on aid spending 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) set more than 40 years ago. Multilateral banks committed \$400 bn.

2. Maintaining peace is essential for development. A threat to international peace and stability by non-state actors is emerging as a major factor for both developed and developing countries. The recent crisis in Syria has forced 12 million people to leave their homes and made them refugees.

3. Measuring progress: A number of targets in the SDGs are not quantified. The indicators for measuring progress have not yet been identified. Even if they limit to two indicators per target there will be 338 indicators to monitor and report. "Having 169 targets is like having no targets at all." Measurability will depend on the availability of data and capacity to measure them.

4. Accountability: There was a lack of accountability for inputs into MDGs at all levels. This challenge needs to be addressed in SDGs. At the international level, most of the developed countries have not met the target of allocating 0.7% of GNI to international aid in the last 40 years. The lack of priority in funds allocation within country budget has also been a problem during MDGs. Similar lack of accountability exists at ministry, state, and local administration level. If we take SDGs seriously the accountability needs to be strengthened at all levels.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The SDGs process represents the true birth of global public participation in setting the UN development agenda; with goals providing the foundations guiding intergovernmental and hopefully governmental agendas. As identified above, deficiencies exist in the outreach efforts, highlighted the differences between MDGs and SDGs and highlighting the challenges that needed attention in achieving SDGs. Despite the above criticism, the SDGs represent a better framework than the MDGs. Their scope is broader and now includes – albeit imperfectly – important issues

such as environmental sustainability, inequality, good governance, remittances, migration, social protection, etc. However, considerable work remains at the national and the global level to realize their potential.

At the national level, each country must select from among the SDG items those that are most relevant to the local context. Agenda 2030 foresees this step: 'Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances.

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